

## SUDBURY GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

BY W. W. HODSON.

Four hundred years ago, or in 1491, was made the Will of the Founder of the Sudbury Grammar School. About 120 years previously the ill-fated Archbishop, Simon Theobald, of Sudbury, founded a College "for poor priests," adjoining S. Gregory's Churchyard, on the site of the house where he had spent his boyhood. And now the Warden of that College—William Wood—inspired by the same desire for the spread of education, which was shortly afterwards to revolutionize the world, imitated the learned and powerful Primate and Chancellor, and gave land and houses for "a good and honest person to teach grammar, and continually and daily instruct there in the same for ever those who should be willing to assemble at the school." The Will of the Founder is an interesting document, which has never yet been published. Its testamentary dispositions, and the spirit that pervades the quaint document, gives us an insight into the character and beneficent intentions of the testator.

William Wood was not only Master, or Warden of Sudbury College, but also Rector of S. Gregory's, with the chapel of S. Peter; and as "spiritual Father" of these two parishes he was a Visitor, conjointly with the Mayor of Sudbury, of John Colney's hospital for poor lepers. In addition to the customary pious bequests of money for "oblations perchance due and unpaid to the Altar," and for a Trental of (or 30) Masses, he bequeathed several valuable Service and other books for the use of the brethren at the College, and the priest of S. Gregory's. There was "A Collection of the two Greater Processions," and the "Book of Martyrs" (not John Foxe's), which contained a "Treatise on the Ladder of Heaven and the Advance of Virtue," which (he laid this down as a *sine qua non*), the Warden, Chaplain, and co-brethren should

cause "solemnly to be read during the time they should continue in the choir," as was done in the church of Salisbury. If the legatees refused to carry out this injunction, the book was to pass to the Collegiate Church of the Blessed Mary de Pratis, in Norwich, and in default of the brethren there, to the College at Mettingham. The testator further provides: "Also I bequeath to the same College (S. Gregory's), my high silver cup, having this inscription, 'God be with us,' with the cover to the same, having at the top a dove, and my best plain porcelain dish without feet, and three silver spoons, partly inlaid with gold in the handles." To the College Library he gave a Bible, in two volumes; "S. Nicholas of Lycias on the Bible," in three volumes; and "The great 'Concordance,'" all printed; a copy of the "Holy Martyrs," a pair of Decretals, a "Text-book," with the right Doctrines immediately following; an "Elementary Book of Doctrine," "Abbot Nicholas on the Decretals," in five volumes; "Durandus," with pictures, in two volumes; and "The Provincial Constitutions, with Notes." To Holy Trinity College, Cambridge, the learned Warden bequeathed his silver salt cellars, with covers; twelve spoons, a porcelain dish, and a Service Book for the choir, commonly called the "Chain Coucher," the "History of Cambridge," by Henry Bowyer, in two volumes, with a chain for the same, and other books. There were also bequests to his parish church of Fornham, and legacies to the brethren, choristers, and servants of Sudbury College, as also to each bailiff of the Manor of Sudbury. Money was also ordered to be spent "upon laudable decorations of the Church of the Monastery of S. Edmund, of Bury."

The second portion of the Will refers more particularly to the Grammar School. The Founder gives to his feoffees, William Felton, John Wayte (chaplain), Wm. Warren, otherwise called Baker (grocer), and John Brooke, of Sudbury, a message with a croft of land, formerly belonging to John Hill, of Sudbury, situate near the lane leading from the house of the Mendicant Friars unto the Church of S. Gregory, namely, between the tenement of

John Robert, Senr, Robert Malden, and John Chapman, on the north side, and the lane called Wyle-werle Lane, (now Christopher Lane), on the south side; the lane now called School Street on the west; and John Baker's garden on the east. The messuage was to be used as the school-house, and the Schoolmaster was to be appointed by the College Warden, at a salary of ten shillings a year; (equivalent to about £5), to be paid at Easter and Michaelmas. But the master was not to be overpaid for his "constant and daily teaching of Grammar," for out of his stipend he was to do all repairs, and well keep up house, school, and croft. If this were not done by the Schoolmaster, or the Warden, the salary was to be forfeited to the feoffees, who were to do the necessary work to the premises.

The following provisions seem stringent, but were necessary in those days:—"Also I will and bequeath that howsoever, whensoever, and as often as the said Grammar Master shall not be of good and honest conversation, and it shall happen the same place be void, then the Warden and his successor shall provide and appoint another good, honest, and fit man as Grammar Master within a year next after such vacancy." If the vacancy were not filled up, and the Grammar Mastership remained void for six years "without fraud and covin" (that is, a collusive or fraudulent compact), or the Master refused to teach, then the property was to be sold, and the money therefrom arising to be disposed (thus the Testator provides, "for the salvation of my soul and the souls of my benefactors in works of charity, and performance of masses, as shall seem best expedient to my feoffees and most acceptable to God.")

There are also bequests to the Cowlinge clergy, for requiems for the testator's soul and other memorial services. The Parish Warden throughout the document is called "*Æconomist*, or Warden," the first word written with the initial *æ* diphthong, and used in the Greek sense of one who carries out an arrangement or system; in the same manner we speak of the Jewish or Christian economy. The word as employed in this Will is very uncommon.

and as Wood was evidently a classical scholar he, no doubt, drafted his own Will, using this expressive term.

The religious and charitable Sudbury benefactor makes a touching request in his Will respecting his burial. It runs thus :

“I bequeath and commend my soul to God Omnipotent, the Blessed Virgin, and all Saints, and my Body to be buried in the Parish Church, in a certain part of the Sanctuary of the Collegiate Church of S. Gregory aforesaid, being in the daily view of the Master, or Warden, and co-brethren of the present and all future times.”

Benefactors to their church, or parish, often directed that they should be interred within churches, and the spots selected were generally “in the Chancel,” “before, or near the Altar,” “before the Cross,” or before certain Images. Thus Sir Andrew Boteler, or Botiller, in his Will, dated 12 December, 1429 (the first complete English Will that was made), directs that his body should be buried before the Image of S. Mary Magdalene in this same church of S. Gregory. In 1386 Johanna Peyton requested that her body should be buried in the porch of S. Gregory's, next the grave of her late husband. But our Sudbury benefactor affectionately asks that his last resting place may not only be within the holy sanctuary, but also where it might be in the daily view of the College brethren for all future time.

It is a coincidence worthy of note that the same year Wm. Wood made his Will, making provision for the teaching of future generations of Sudburians, Wm. Caxton, the first English printer, died, whose printing press “turned the world upside down,” and largely assisted in bringing about a reformation, both in learning and religion. From his cumbrous hand-press, with its wooden types, at the Almonry, at Westminster, streamed forth the light that gradually illumined not only England, but the world. Probably from this press came the “printed books”—folio Bibles, Concordances, and Processionals—in William Wood's library, bequeathed to Sudbury College. In the little cell under the walls of S. Peter's Abbey, on the banks of the Thames, were printed the poems of Chaucer and Gower, and of the Bury romancing monk, John

Lydgate, a disciple of Chaucer, one of whose religious poems, in black-letter, within illuminated scrolls, may be seen on the cornice and beams of the Clopton Chapel at Melford Church. From the same prolific press flowed poems and prayers, sermons and sports, books of chess and carols, cards and chivalry, ballads and benedictions; treatises on philosophy and processions, love and literature, "The Canterbury Tales," and "The Golden Legend." Latin Grammars and Greek Delectuses for the Sudbury youth of Wood's school would not be wanting now Caxton's press was in operation.

Scarcely half a century had passed, and the College, so beloved by its generous Warden, had shared the fate that befell the religious houses in the time of the 8th Henry. In consideration of the sum of £1,200 paid by Sir Thomas Paston, of Norfolk, one of the lords of the King's bedchamber, the College, with its large possessions, the rectories of SS. Gregory and Peter, with the presentation to the Grammar School, passed to him and his family. Richard Eden, of Ballingdon Hall, was the last Warden.

The College disappeared, and the "poor-priests" were scattered, but happily the School remains e'en to the present day. There is no record of the date or the giver, but subsequently the School income was largely augmented by the rents and profits of the School Farm, at Great Maplestead.

Another century has passed with its stirring events, and we reach the time of the Commonwealth, and are introduced to the learned antiquarian Puritan Member of Parliament for Sudbury, Sir Simon d'Ewes, and read the following note in his diary, which is preserved among the Harleian mss. (Vol. I., p. 50, cod. 160) in the British Museum: "This letter was sent to me from Mr. Smyth, a minister, of Suthberie, in Suffolk, of which town I was a Burgess in this present Parliament." The letter is dated 1641. The writer complains that both the Church, Free (or Grammar) School, and Hospital for the poor, which are "part of the common and public good and of high concernment, and to which the town is not a little wanting, have been too shamefully abused and diverted," and he

urged Sir Simon, with Sir Nathaniel Barnardiston, and Sir Philip Parker, M.P.'s for the county, "to further the town in the way of equity to the Lords."

In 1712 the lessee of the church of S. Gregory and the chapel of S. Peter brought an action in the Supreme Court to recover the tithes of School Field, King's Marsh, Portman's Croft, Sudbury Common, and Nonsuch Field. The defendant, Gibbon, admitted holding a piece of ground called "Schoolhouse Field," and that he had cut grass thereon and made the same into hay, and fed his horse thereon, the tithe of which was worth ten shillings. It was ordered by the Court that the defendant should account for the tithes on the Schoolhouse Field and certain other lands, the plaintiff to have costs.

During great part of last century the rectory of S. Gregory, with S. Peter's, the tithes and the presentation to the Grammar School belonged to the family of the Upchers. Mr. Robert Upcher, a Sudbury surgeon, by Will dated 1760, bequeathed "the nomination of a Parson to the churches of Saints Gregory and Peter annexed, in Sudbury, and also a Schoolmaster to the Grammar School, being a donative with the farm at Great Maplestead, in Essex, called the School Farm, in the tenure of William Maleham, curate, &c., to the said Rectory and School, in order for six free scholars to be taught yearly and every year in like manner as Henry Burroughs, clerk, did formerly" to his nephew and executor, Peter Upcher, Gent. In a terrier of lands, &c., belonging to the then "perpetual curacy" and church of S. Gregory, dated 1833, there is an extract from a former terrier, dated 1723, as under: "We have in this parish a Grammar School, founded by William Wood, master of the College, about the year 1491, endowed with a dwelling-house, croft of land (about three-quarters of an acre), with an orchard and garden in the same parish, and an estate at Maplestead, in Essex, commonly known by the name of the School Farm; rent, £29 per annum, the present Humphry Burrough, clerk." In 1757 the right of presentation of the Curate and Master

of the School was made the subject of a conveyance separate from the tithes and other possessions of the Rectory, but soon afterwards it became re-united thereto.

In 1812 (10th November), Sir Lachlan Maclean, the patron of the two livings and lay rector, became by purchase patron of the school; but after the death of the Rev. W. Finley, the "Perpetual Curate" and Grammar School Master, in 1817, did not appoint a master, but claimed the Maplestead School Farm as his private property. The original purchase-money was £5,500, but Sir Lachlan soon after his acquisition sold the greater part of the tithes for £4,400, retaining the right of nomination to the living, and the appointment of schoolmaster. He, however, expended about £700 in rebuilding the school-house, which he let to the Rev. Simon Young, at a low rental, on condition that he should teach six free scholars, as his predecessors had done. The farm was then let at from £80 to £90 a year, and afterwards at £95, and some years since at £125. In 1827 the patron appointed his son as "Master," a Mr. Mills discharging all the duties. At that time the six free boys were taught reading, writing, and arithmetic, and the day scholars, or boarders, Latin, &c. From 1714 to this date (about a hundred years), the masters of the school had been also "perpetual curates" of the parishes of SS. Gregory and Peter.

The Charity Commissioners visited Sudbury in 1826, and recommended the direction of a Court of Equity for determining the right of the school to the Maplestead Farm. A suit was commenced in 1830, which lasted till 1858. Soon after, the cause of "The Attorney-General *versus* Maclean" was commenced, the boarding-school was broken up, the charity boys were dismissed, the master left the schoolhouse, and the premises fell into a dilapidated state.

The suit, from its slow progress, bid fair to outrival the celebrated case of "Jarndyce *v.* Jarndyce," for it was not till 1858 that a new scheme for the management of the school, and the application of the income, was approved by the Court of Chancery. A mortgage was effected on

the Maplestead property, and the present handsome pile of buildings erected at a cost of over £2,500. The farm was sold in August, 1891, by public auction, for £1,675.

In 1858 the old school was demolished. It was an old grey, and very scholastic-looking building, and its clustered chimneys, stone windows, its mixture of timber and stonework, mediæval plaster, and other noticeable features, pointed to a date of erection co-eval with the founder.

It was here that Thomas Gainsborough, the painter, as a boy, received his education.

“The bench on which he sat, while deep employed,  
Though mangled, hacked, and hewed, not yet destroyed ;  
The wall on which he tried his graving skill,  
The very name he carved, existing still.”

—Thus wrote Fulcher, the Sudbury poet, nearly 40 years ago, of Gainsborough, the Sudbury painter. But bench and wall, initials and hackings, are all gone with the venerable, but sadly dilapidated building, where they were to be seen when Fulcher wrote. Quoting again from his “Life of Gainsborough,” published two years before the old schoolhouse was demolished: “Near his initials is a deep cut figure in the mouldering wall, an evident caricature of the schoolmaster, which it requires no great stretch of imagination to attribute to the penknife of Master Gainsborough.” This pedagogue was his uncle—the Rev. Humphry Burroughs (already referred to),—whose wife was a daughter of the learned Dr. Busby, whose handling of cane and pen were experimentally well known to his pupils. Alban Cunningham records that “at ten years old Gainsborough had made some progress in sketching, and at twelve was a confirmed painter.” His copy books were “illustrated with cuts,” and his schoolmates’ exercise books testified to his skill as a caricaturist. As a set-off for these pen-and-ink drawings, his chums would work his sums and prepare his Latin verses, so that his progress in learning was not rapid. Whenever he could, he would ramble in the woods and meadows, taking a crust of bread for his frugal lunch, and would return at night with his

sketch book filled with "studies" of landscapes and buildings, and cottage homesteads. His father, as a special favour, would occasionally write a note to the uncle asking for a holiday for Tom. One day, when he had declined doing so, the boy, resolving not to be disappointed, imitated his father's handwriting and presented his uncle with a slip of paper, with the customary request, "Give Tom a holiday." Having obtained the longed-for boon, Tom started off on his planned sketching expedition, minus, however, the lunch. It was found out that he was absent without leave, and his father, fancying he saw in his son a dangerous forger, wrathfully exclaimed, "Tom will one day be hanged!" When, however, the more prescient mother laid the truant's spirited sketches before the irate father, he changed his tone and declared "Tom will be a genius!"

In 1878 the Charity Commissioners prepared a new scheme, which provides for a commercial, as well as a classical curriculum, and allows the Governors to appoint a layman, if they consider it desirable. The school has been gradually increasing in numbers of late years, both of day scholars and boarders. From the funds of Girling's and Upcher's Charities, two boys are sent up yearly from the Charity (or National) Schools. There is a meadow, used as a play ground, attached to the school, and arrangements have been made with the Trustees of the Public Recreation Ground, for the boys to have the use of that ground, on certain easy terms, for cricket and football. The Governors form a very representative body, partly elective, Colonel Barnardiston (whose family has long been connected with Sudbury), being the chairman. Both the civil and ecclesiastical authorities are represented, the Mayor and the beneficed clergy of the town having seats on the Board of Management.

*"Floreat Sudburiensis schola!"*